

TO: CT Legislature

FROM: Randi S. Rubin Rodriguez- 142 Judwin Ave., New Haven, CT 06515

DATE: March 6, 2012

RE: SB296

*Spoken*

I am Randi Rubin Rodriguez, 142 Judwin Ave., New Haven, CT 06515. I am speaking to you today wearing three hats; a Mother of several children, two of whom are adopted; a child welfare professional for over 25 years and an advocate for human rights. I thank you for the many hours of dedication you each commit to the well being of all of CT's children and families, and in particular for hearing today's bill.

As a mother I would like to relay a brief interaction that occurred relative to the importance of this bill. Several years ago another adoptive trans-racial family and ours were sitting in the Athenian Diner having lunch. An African American couple whom we knew walked up and greeted us and proceeded to sit down at their booth. One child stared at them for what felt like an inappropriate amount of time and then said to the other adopted child: "I wonder if those are your grandparents."

Of course you could hear a pin drop. These were eight year olds; sharing some of their most intimate questions in such a public way. Why is it that our State can take this information from birth parents and withhold it for life from our children? We have created an unofficial CT witness program for birth parents and protect their anonymity for life! Why?

Choosing adoption as a life for your child is not only a difficult decision but it is a loving decision. By withholding birth parents' information we inadvertently add a level of shame, secrecy and guilt.

As a child welfare professional, co-founder of the 'r kids Family Center , in New Haven, we have completed many adoptions over the years; some through the Department of Children and Families and the termination of parents' rights and some voluntary relinquishment. At no time, under any of those circumstances

has a birth parent requested anonymity. And yet, when completing life books for these children, we have been instructed that their original birth certificates may not be included! Even when the parents are requesting it and the adoptive family is grateful. Why?

As we progress as a society and develop more and more sophisticated medical technology, are we creating a second class of citizens who will never have access to their familial biological histories, filled with all the many diseases, talents, quirks and innuendos necessary to help develop our identities?

It is a basic human right to know where we come from and know who we come from. The color of their eyes, the particular texture of their hair, and all the many traits and characteristics we each inherit biologically. Even when you adopt a dog through the American Kennel Club you will have more history on your puppy's past and parents than when you adopt a child thru the State of CT

CT has prized itself on being a progressive state when it comes to child welfare practice and our new Commissioner is moving us forward. Please vote to grant our children access to their original birth certificates. It is their basic right to know.

I thank you for your time and attention to this. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further discussion. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time .